

**Jerome's Heart Went Through a Series of Violent Gymnastics, While Alison Found the Whole Incident So Exciting**

# GOLDEN SILENCE

BY  
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**T**WO of the three important things in life had already happened to Jerome Kenyon. He had been born, and he had just been married. Aside from these vital episodes, nothing noteworthy had occurred until he was leaving the church with his bride. Not many minutes later his bride left him with the passionate declaration that he hoped never to look upon his face again!

This happened in front of the Grand Central station. The quarrel, flaring up like a lighted match tossed on a heap of unconfined explosive, left Jerome no choice but to withdraw hastily from the danger zone. He was fully convinced that the confrontation would be short-lived and that on his return from checking the luggage he would find his bride amenable to argument. But in this he was mistaken, for he did not find her at all.

It was not the first of such quarrels. The cause had always been the same. Some would have called it Alison's temperamental nature; others might have called it merely Alison's bad temper.

Like many optimistic lovers, Jerome felt great confidence in the power of the marital state to correct these passing indulgences. He argued to himself that the conditions of engagement were in themselves most trying to a volatile temperament.

Now, in a singular state of daze, Jerome went back to the baggage room, barely in time to save his luggage and Alison's from being put aboard the train. He sent Alison's effects to her father's house in Gramercy Park and had his own put in a taxi.

Turning the ridiculous situation in his mind, Jerome was astonished to discover a curious sense of relief. There had been too many such quarrels, each abstracting its tribute of tenderness from an emotion which had been cooling through some weeks. Jerome did not know just what the solution might be for such a situation, but he had a vague idea that there was a legal remedy known as an annulment which bore about the same relation to divorce as did a betrothal to a wedding. He stepped into the taxi and told the driver to go to the McAlpin.

As the vehicle became a part of the 5th Avenue procession, Jerome leaned back and tried to compose his mind. But at this moment he caught sight of a young woman who less than an hour before had offered him subdued congratulations at the church.

It had been a quiet noon wedding and this young lady was no doubt walking home for luncheon.

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"STOP a moment," said Jerome to the driver, as the taxi drew up to the curb. He stepped out. "Took faint, Sylvia," said he. "Get in car, ride downtown with me."

"But—but—" "But into the taxi," said Jerome. "There has been the most awful mess..."

Sylvia obeyed in a state of trance, then turned and looked at him in dismay.

"Oh, dear," said she. "I did hope you two could manage to get away without a fight."

"We haven't, though," said Jerome. "I suppose that at this moment Alison is on her way to apply for an annulment."

"What happened?"

"Listen and be my judge," said Jerome. "As we were about to start away from the church, a messenger boy stepped up to the car and handed me a note. I excused myself to Alison and opened it. There were a few brief lines and a telegram. I glanced at both and shoved them into my pocket."

"Without showing them to Alison?"

"Yes."

"She asked to see it."

"No. She demanded to see it. I told her that it was a business communication which I would rather not discuss at the moment."

"What a beautiful start!" murmured Sylvia. "Knowing Alison, I can reconstruct the rest. Did you end by showing her the note?"

"No. If I had, I would not be here at this moment. Moreover, I am not at all sure but what I would rather be here in this taxi with you."

"I think you had better let me out," said Sylvia. "An annulment is better than a divorce with alimony and a former sweetheart named as co-respondent. You could not afford the alimony and I could not afford the scandal. But first tell me what was in the note?"

"Not until you tell me your decision. What would you have done?"

Sylvia pondered for a moment. Jerome watched her anxiously. He had once gone nearly as far with Sylvia as he had with Alison, but circumstances had interfered. Looking now at her pretty profile with thoughtful gray eyes with their long black lashes, he wondered that he had let them interfere. Poverty and a social position which each felt under obligation to maintain had been the principal factor. Then came the geographical separation of the Atlantic ocean, and then—Alison.

Sylvia took a deep breath. "Well," she answered slowly, "if I'd gone as far as Alison, I'd have seen it through. I'd have carried on if it had been bigamy."

"Why?"

The color flooded her face. "Oh—for a lot of reasons. But I don't think I'd have stopped to weigh them just at that particular moment. What Alison did is rather like playing a roulette bet, then snatching it away after the crooper has said 'Rien ne va plus.'"

Jerome gave a sigh of relief. "Please my idea," said he.

"Just what did you say?" Sylvia asked.

"I said that I would show her the note and telegram when the proper time came."

"Was that the end of it?"

"That was the end of everything. She implied that I was holding something back until it would be too late for her to retrieve her mistake. Her final words on reaching the station were that she wished she might never see my face again."

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Sylvia moved uneasily. "Well, Jerry," she said, "now that I've given my decision, show me the note and let me out. Can't you realize what will happen to me if some friend discovers us riding down 5th Avenue together at this particular

moment in a taxi heaped with luggage?"

"All right," said Jerome. "I'll show you the note as soon as you answer one more question: Will you marry me as soon as Alison gets the marriage annulled?"

They crowded back even farther in her corner. "Yes," she murmured. "I never loved anybody but you, Jerry."

Jerome bent toward her. "What if this telegram warns me to leave the country, and quick? What if it tells you that I'm the bigamist you just suggested? Remember that I've been four years abroad."

Sylvia looked at him with dancing eyes and a smile on her red lips.

"Well, Jerry, if you've got two already, one more wife won't make the sentence any heavier. Besides, there's luck in odd numbers."

"There's luck in you," said Jerome, and picked up the speaking tube. "Go to Hoboken," he ordered. The driver nodded. Sylvia looked surprised.

"Why Hoboken?" she asked.

"Just to go across the ferry," said Jerome. "I want room to kiss you, and if I don't feel it pretty quick, I'll burn."

"You must have been awfully in love with Alison, Jerry."

"Well, I'm not now. Heavens, what a close escape! What a time we would have had! And I've got a hunch it would inevitably have come to this in the end." He took Sylvia's hand and raised it to his lips. Then suddenly his face whitened. "What if she shouldn't annul the marriage?" he exclaimed.

Sylvia gave him a steady look. "Then you'll be the one that would have to carry on, Jerry, and all of this will have to be scrapped with the rest of the might-have-beens."

Jerome's face darkened. He picked up the tube again. "Draw up to the curb," he said.

"You're right, Sylvia. I'll set you down here. But remember, I've your promise."

"I'm not apt to forget it, Jerry; but it doesn't matter. You're not going to escape as easily as that. Alison has had a change of heart by this time, and her father will take a hand."

The taxi slowed and stopped on a side street, where the sidewalk was littered with bales and boxes. Jerome opened the door.

"How about the note?" he asked.

Sylvia stepped out, then turned and looked at him with a smile on her quivering lips and eyes which sparkled through a sudden gush of tears.

"You can show me that the day after we're married—if that day ever comes," said she; whereupon she turned, stumbled over a crate, recovered herself and moved away.

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**J**EROME hung up the receiver of the telephone and stood for a moment in thought. He was dispeased at the nature of the message just received: "Mr. Arnold would like to see Mr. Kenyon at his office between ten and eleven."

Jerome had telephoned his father-in-law that he would be at the McAlpin for the next two days, and the message just received was the answer to this information.

A hour later Jerome presented himself at the law offices of Arnold, Thorpe & Maitby, where, to his further annoyance, he was requested to wait near the entrance room. Then a rather supercilious young person ushered him into Mr. Arnold's private office. The lawyer, a big man with a rather pompous and at this moment aggressive manner, looked up with a frown as Jerome was ushered in. Jerome bowed slightly and stood at attention.

"Well, young man," said Mr. Arnold in a heavy bass, "what is your version of this silly business?"

"I haven't any, sir."

"Then what is your excuse?"

"I have no excuse, sir."

Mr. Arnold's frown deepened. "Then I understand that I am to form my opinion entirely from what my daughter tells me?"

"Why not?" asked Jerome. "You surely don't suspect her of not having told the truth."

"Oh, come, Jerome," said Mr. Arnold, abandoning his magisterial air. "I know, of course, that Alison is quick-tempered and impulsive, but you could scarcely expect any woman not to insist on learning the contents of a message handed to her husband as she was leaving the church just after the ceremony."

"I told her she might see it a little later," Jerome answered. "I said that it was a business matter which I would explain at the proper time. She was not satisfied with this and intimated that it might be something to interfere with our new relations, and she insisted on knowing what it was before it became, as she expressed it, 'too late.'

"In which I think she was quite within her right," said Mr. Arnold.

"Very well, sir," Jerome answered. "In that case there seems nothing more to be said."

The blood surged into the lawyer's face. "There is a great deal more to be said, young man. You persuade my daughter to marry you, which she does—not, I may say, entirely with my approval. While your connections may be good, we know actually very little about you beyond the fact that you are said to be an architect of some promise and have a good record. Your earnings are small, while the expectations of my daughter are considerable. Believing the attachment between you to be sincere, I have been willing to waive other considerations. And then just as you are leaving the church, you receive a mysterious communication, the nature of which you refuse to divulge until to use my daughter's own expression, which I find explicit, 'it may be too late.'

"Not until you tell me your decision. What would you have done?"

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a sudden change of tone and manner. "don't you think, yourself, that you might have been a little more forgiving?"

Jerome felt his resolution giving way. He had counted on the lawyer's anger, but now suddenly he saw his own position in a different light. The thought of Sylvia struck him with a frightening pang, it was a pang of renunciation.

He moistened his dry lips. "How does Alison feel about it now, sir?" he asked.

"She regrets it," answered Mr. Arnold. "She has authorized me to say that she is sorry for her hastiness, and would prefer that the whole incident be stricken out."

Jerome's heart sank. "Then am I to understand, sir," he asked in a strained voice, "that she wishes to go ahead as if nothing had occurred to interfere with our plans?"

"Such is her desire," said Mr. Arnold.

"And she does not insist on knowing the contents of the message I received?"

"No. But I think unless there's some particular reason for your not doing so, it would be much better to clear up the cause of the misunderstanding."

"And you don't insist on knowing it yourself?" Jerome demanded, a good deal as if nothing had occurred to him.

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